

Massachusetts Conservation Update

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Spring 2005



USDA  **NRCS**

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

in partnership with



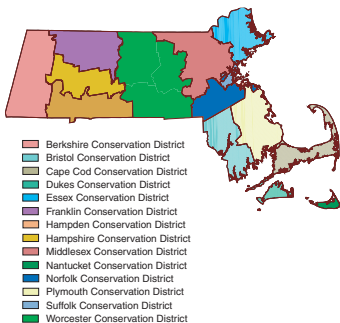
State Commission for
the Conservation of
Soil, Water and Related
Resources



Massachusetts
Association of
Conservation
Districts

The Massachusetts Conservation Partnership

When state environmental agencies and local conservation districts work hand-in-hand with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the result is a strong Conservation Partnership for all of Massachusetts.



USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the federal agency that shows farmers and other landowners how to improve and protect their natural resources through simple conservation practices and federal conservation programs that can improve water quality and maintain healthy and productive lands.

Americans have been consulting NRCS for decades; seeking expert advice on issues like erosion, water quality and soil productivity.

NRCS is not a regulatory agency. Rather, landowners and NRCS specialists work together on a voluntary basis to develop a conservation plan that leads to wise stewardship.

NRCS provides assistance directly to citizens and communities who request it. The agency is teeming with conservation specialists—biologists, planners, engineers, soil scientists, technicians and geologists—primed to address your natural resource concerns.

Conservation Districts

A conservation district is a subdivision of state government, established under state law to carry out programs for the conservation and wise management of soil, water and related resources.

There are 14 conservation districts in Massachusetts. Each district is governed by a board of supervisors – locally elected citizens who volunteer their time and leadership to the conservation effort.

Conservation district supervisors work directly with NRCS to deliver technical assistance to the people of Massachusetts. Each conservation district is a voice for the community, providing leadership on conservation issues and establishing priorities for conservation activities and programs.

The Bay State's 14 districts collaborate as a statewide organization through the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD).

The State Commission for Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources

As part of the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the State Commission for Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources serves as a resource for local conservation districts.

Through state environmental agencies including the departments of Conservation and Recreation, Agricultural Resources, Fish & Game and Environmental Protection, conservation districts have access to state resources for delivery at the local level.

The State Commission also provides the mechanisms for regional projects such as the Massachusetts Envirothon a highly successful environmental education program for high school students.

Working closely with the USDA-NRCS the state commission provides excellent opportunities to coordinate and focus state and federal programs for conservation work in Massachusetts.

Resource Conservation & Development Councils

RC&D is a program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) . The program, administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was created in 1962 and is based on the assumption that local citizens -- RC&D Councils -- with help provided through the USDA, can develop and carry out an action-oriented plan for the economic, social and environmental enrichment of their communities.

The RC&D Program promotes conservation, development, and use of natural resources to improve economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living in all communities. The program's aim is to provide a system for rural development, encourage the wise use of natural resources, and improve the quality of life.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service FY 2005 - Massachusetts

2005 Outlook

\$12 million in cost-share and farmland protection funding for Massachusetts farmers

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has received more than \$12 million in federal conservation cost-share and farmland protection funding this year to help Massachusetts farmers address natural resource concerns and preserve their land for future generations.

With financial and technical assistance from NRCS, farmers and other landowners will continue to promote environmental quality on farmland, address water quality and quantity challenges, and protect valuable wetland ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

"These funds will help Massachusetts landowners remain good environmental stewards by working in partnership with NRCS field staff in communities across the commonwealth," said State Conservationist Cecil B. Currin.

"USDA remains committed to providing conservation tools and resources to ensure that Bay State land remains healthy and productive," said Currin.

Cost-share funding is available through several voluntary conservation programs authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. Through these programs, landowners may receive up to 75 percent of installation costs for conservation practices, depending on producer, land and practice eligibility criteria.

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program funds are administered through the state Department of Agricultural Resources' Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.

DISCRETIONARY FUNDS	FY2004	FY2005
Conservation Operations		
Technical Assistance	\$3,432,439	\$2,721,414
Soil Survey	\$855,000	\$905,000
Watershed Surveys and Planning	\$128,500	\$507,100
Watershed and Flood Prevention		
Watershed Operations	\$243,000	\$388,374
Watershed Rehabilitation	\$135,000	\$115,081
Resource Conservation & Development	\$391,500	\$381,000
TOTAL - Discretionary Funds	\$5,185,439	\$5,017,969

MANDATORY FUNDS (Financial assistance for cost-share programs)	FY2004	FY2005
Agricultural Management Assistance	\$377,114	\$371,957
AMA is a voluntary program available in 15 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. AMA provides cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to address risk management concerns linked to water management, water quality and erosion control issues.		
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$6,453,000	\$4,952,573
Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.		
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	\$3,926,200	\$4,498,859
FRPP provides funds to purchase the development rights to farmland, preserving productive farmland for agricultural use.		
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	\$705,000	\$968,758
GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.		
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	\$535,000	\$513,820
WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property.		
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$875,000	\$1,553,960
WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land.		
TOTAL - Mandatory Funds	\$12,871,314	\$12,896,327

Current Developments

Conservation Security Program

Two Massachusetts watersheds – one in Berkshire County and one in Essex County – are among 202 across the nation selected for the Conservation Security Program (CSP), a new federal program designed to reward farmers for long-term land stewardship.

CSP, which is administered by NRCS, is a stewardship program that recognizes the efforts of farmers who have been practicing conservation and taking care of the land for some time. Meeting specific eligibility criteria allows farmers to apply for payments on productive land at several levels. Payments increase with the amount of conservation work that has been done.

"The purpose of CSP is to reward the best and motivate the rest," said NRCS Regional Assistant Chief, Richard Coombe. "These payments for demonstrable long-term stewardship will reward many of those who undertook conservation on their own initiative and who care for the resources we all share."

CSP, part of the 2002 Farm Bill, was introduced last summer in 18 watersheds nationwide. Last fall marked the first opportunity for farmers from each state to participate, about one eighth of the nation's eligible farmers will be given the chance to apply each year over an eight-year period.

Farms located in the selected Massachusetts watersheds will be eligible to apply for CSP. The program will continue to be offered each year, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds as funding allows.

"As an agency, we have helped farmers fix conservation problems such as soil erosion or water conservation," said Cecil B. Currin, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. "CSP, however, represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs."

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on the farm. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment as well as the landowner's willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

Key conservation issues in Massachusetts

- Open space and farmland protection
- Water quality and quantity
- Local food production
- Farm viability enhancement
- Cranberry industry sustainability
- Dairy industry sustainability

Farmland Protection

Massachusetts' strong economy and its large population centers exert intense pressure to develop farmland for residential and commercial uses.

The Bay State's roughly 6,100 farmers generate close to \$400 million annually in wholesale cash receipts. Local farms also keep more than 520,000 acres of farmland in active production.

Agricultural acreage in Massachusetts has dropped by more than 1.5 million acres since 1945, an alarming rate of decline which has prompted the state and its rural communities to develop strategies for protecting farmland.

NRCS works hand-in-hand with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to protect prime Bay State farmland. Since 1996, NRCS has provided \$8.2 million in Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program funds to the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction program to purchase farmland development rights on nearly 6,000 acres.

Since its first acquisition in 1980, the APR program has invested nearly \$126 million in protecting some 51,000 acres in 148 towns across the Commonwealth.

NRCS, primarily through RC&D program areas, is also supporting a growing number of local communities that are forming town agricultural commissions to address issues like farmland protection. RC&D coordinators are working with partners including local and regional agricultural organizations and the state agriculture department to provide informational resources to agricultural commission organizers.



Cranberry Farm Planning Program marks 10 years

The Plymouth County Conservation District (PCCD) marked a decade of helping cranberry growers develop plans to protect the region's natural resources on June 18, 2004 with a tour of three cranberry operations involved in the district's ten-year-old Cranberry Farm Planning Program.

Cranberry growers spoke about and demonstrated work done through their conservation plans, much of which addressed water quality and water quantity concerns. Federal and state officials, including NRCS State Conservationist Cecil Currin, and Douglas Gillespie, Massachusetts Commissioner of Agricultural Resources, were on-hand to speak about the importance of the program.

"The Cranberry Farm Planning Program was started to meet the growing demand for farm conservation plans in the commonwealth's cranberry growing counties," said Currin, adding that pilot funding from the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers' Assoc. was matched by the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and NRCS.

Cape Cod Water Resources Project

Based on requests from sponsors, NRCS has proposed an extensive restoration project on Cape Cod to address area-wide natural resource problems caused by stormwater runoff and restore degraded saltmarshes and anadromous fish runs in this coastal area that is pressured by urban development and is a popular recreation area with a high influx of tourists during the summer.

The Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project will address these issues through the Small Watershed Program and will include conservation improvements that are scheduled for implementation over a period of years. NRCS will be the lead technical assistance agency working with a partnership comprised of the Cape Cod Conservation District, Barnstable County Commissioners and other federal, state and local agencies, as well as all Barnstable County towns. The project is still in the planning phase and has not yet been fully funded.

Grant will improve services to grass-based livestock operations

NRCS this year presented the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) with a \$110,000 federal Conservation Partnership Initiative (CPI) Grant for a project that will improve conservation services to local farmers with grass-based livestock operations in the Chicopee River Basin.

NESFI is one of only six organizations nationwide selected to receive a CPI grant this year, and the only organization east of the Mississippi River.

NESFI will lead a partnership of nine organizations to develop a service network to assure good conservation practices on grass-based livestock farms. The project will focus on new farmers and start-up enterprises.

CPI grants are administered by the USDA and are designed to foster conservation partnerships and fund projects that focus technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds of special significance and other geographic areas of environmental sensitivity. CPI is open to state and local governments, tribes and nongovernmental organizations with a history of working with agricultural producers.

Small-scale livestock enterprises are increasingly common in New England's upland watersheds. The region's soil base, hilly terrain, and rain-rich climate are particularly suited to grazing operations. Consumer demand is strong for grass-based farm products because of their social and economic acceptability, as well as their dietary value. Market proximity and well established buy-local campaigns provide regional farmers with a competitive advantage in providing "native grown."

"Grass-based farming and livestock enterprises are central to the future of agriculture in this area," Currin said. "This grant will support the development of locally-led solutions to their natural resource concerns. NESFI is well suited to helping them cooperate and share information to address their environmental challenges."

Current Developments

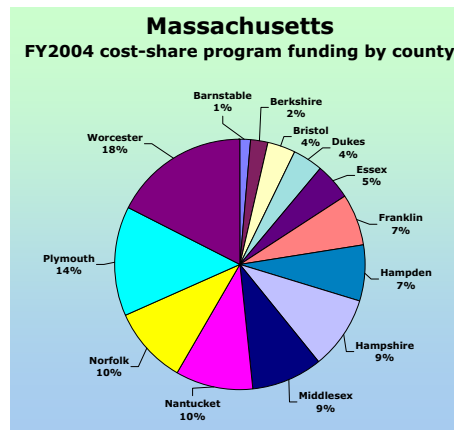


Programs and Results

The 2002 Farm Bill has benefitted Massachusetts farmers by provide the financial and technical assistance enabling farmers to adopt new conservation practices and enhance their operation. The increase in conservation funding since 2002 mirrors the rising demand for NRCS services.

NRCS Cost-Share Programs FY2004

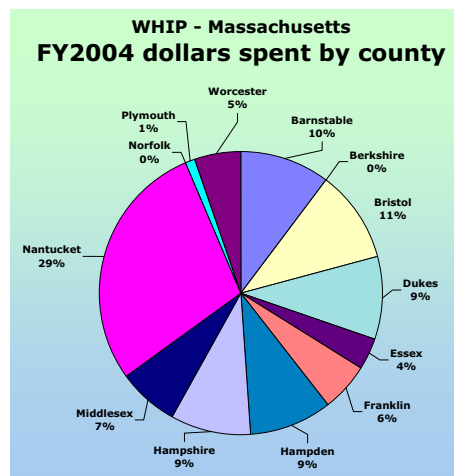
Massachusetts landowners, working in partnership with NRCS, implemented some **\$12 million** worth of conservation projects in 2004 that will safeguard water quality, preserve farmland, improve wildlife habitat and protect wetlands across the Bay State. NRCS programs provided cost-share assistance for the projects.



Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land.

In FY 2004 Massachusetts received **78** applications totaling **\$1.1 million**. Massachusetts received **\$719,534** in FY 2004, which funded **44** projects that protected or restored **1,955** acres of habitat.



Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property.

In FY 2004 Massachusetts received **\$500,000** in WRP funding and **six** applications: **three** to restore cranberry bogs to natural wetlands and **three** for salt marsh restoration. The three salt marsh restoration projects were funded; the three cranberry bog owners withdrew their applications.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.

In FY 2004 Massachusetts received **36** applications under GRP: **four** easement applications and **32** rental applications. The state was allocated **\$624,300**. Ultimately, **\$531,146** was used to fund **24** rental agreements. Other applicants rejected the government purchase offers or withdrew their applications.

Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)

FRPP provides funds to purchase the development rights to farmland, preserving productive farmland for agricultural use.

In FY 2004 Massachusetts received **\$4.4 million** for the acquisition of farmland conservation easements. A cooperative agreement was entered into with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR).

In Massachusetts, FRPP funds are administered through the MDAR's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program.

The agreement will result in the preservation of: **1,200** acres on **24** farms.

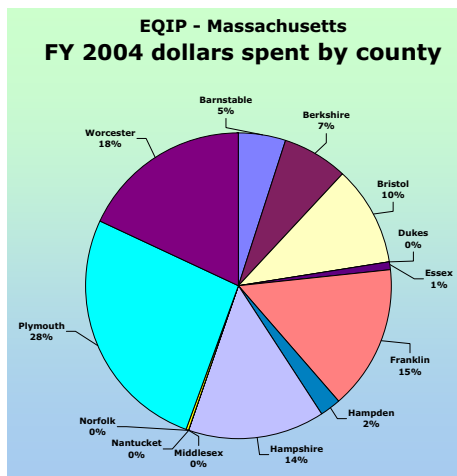
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP is NRCS's flagship program. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

Massachusetts ranks and approves applications for funding based on one statewide process, developed in accordance with national guidance and in conjunction with priorities identified by the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.

NRCS received a total of **484** applications from farmers to make agricultural improvements through the EQIP program in FY 2004. The application proposals totaled more than **\$14 million** in federal cost share.

The associated projects mostly focused on water quality protection and water use savings. Massachusetts received a total cost share allocation of **\$5 million** that supported **170** contracts.



Here's the breakdown of contracts by commodity:

Dairy and other livestock

- **93** contracts
- **\$2,677,366** in cost share

Cranberry

- **45** contracts
- **\$1,541,892** in cost share

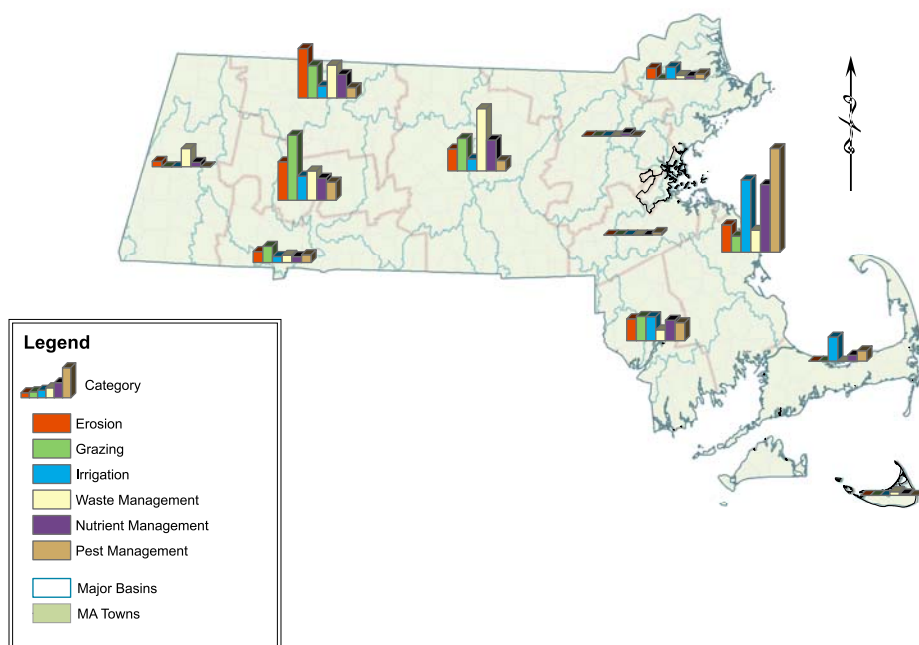
Vegetable and orchard

- **32** contracts
- **\$819,249** in cost share.

Programs and Results



EQIP 2004 Contracts by Category



Massachusetts conservation by the numbers

These are the many and varied conservation practices installed with NRCS technical assistance, and in many cases cost-share assistance, on farms and other land across the commonwealth last year. A single conservation practice may solve a problem, but conservation practices work best together. The use of several practices planned and applied to solve multiple problems is called the "systems approach" to conservation.

Conservation Practices Planned	FY 2004
Access Roads	6,603 feet
Agrichemical Mixing Facilities	7
Agricultural Fuel Containment Facilities	1
Animal Trails and Walkways	83 feet
Barnyard Runoff Management (no)	14,444
Brush Management	281 acres
Composting Facilities	9
Conservation Cover	74 acres
Conservation Crop Rotation	1,331 acres
Contour Farming	103 acres
Cover Crops	5,370 acres
Critical Area Planting	2 acres
Deep Tillage	4 acres
Dike	4,805 feet
Diversion	1,350 feet
Early Successional Habitat Development/Management	211 acres
Fence	108,672 feet
Field Border	15,725 feet
Filter Strip	19 acres
Fish Passages	100
Forage Harvest Management	1,020 acres
Forest Site Preparation	32 acres
Forest Stand Improvement	970 acres
Forest Trails and Landings	16 acres
Grassed Waterway	25 acres
Grazing Land Mechanical Treatmen	5 acres
Heavy Use Area Protection	2 acres
Irrigation Storage Reservoir	12,245 acre feet
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	47
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	420
Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery	1,401
Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline, High-Pressure, Underground, Plastic	63,204 feet
Irrigation Water Conveyance, Pipeline, Low-Pressure, Underground, Plastic	1,850 feet
Irrigation Water Management	1,421 acres
Land Clearing	8 acres
Land Smoothing	27 acres
Lined Waterway or Outlet	250 feet
Manure Transfer	1
Milking Center Wastewater Treatment System	1
Nutrient Management	14,188 acres
Open Channel	3,040 feet
Pasture and Hay Planting	190 acres
Pest Management	6,814 acres
Pipeline	11,856 feet
Planned Grazing System	22 acres
Ponds	2
Prescribed Grazing	44 acres
Prescribed Grazing	1,226 acres

Massachusetts conservation by the numbers

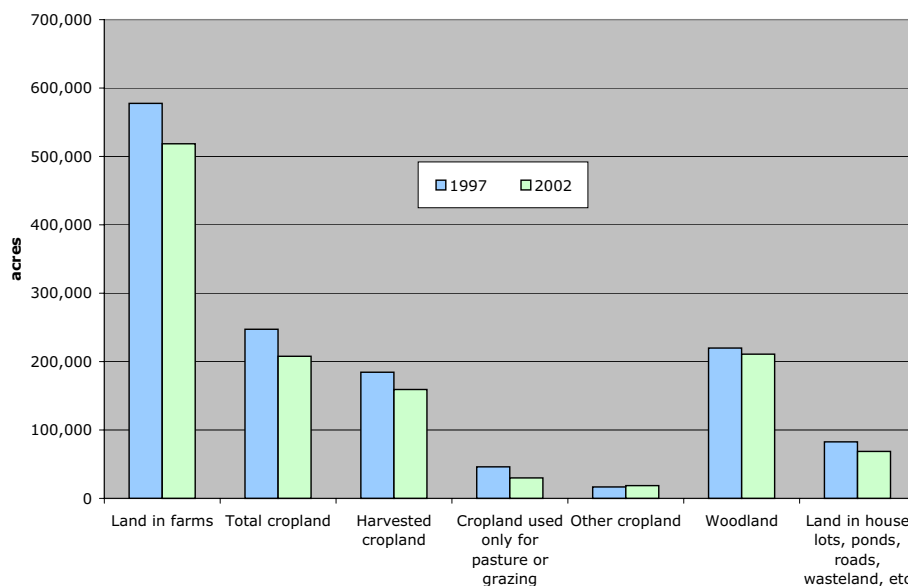
Conservation Practices Planned, continued	FY 2004
Pumping Plant	14
Recreation Area Improvement	1 acre
Recreation Trail and Walkway (568) (ft)	1,000 feet
Residue Management, Mulch Till	462 acres
Residue Management, No-Till/Strip Till	85 acres
Residue Management, Seasonal	92 acres
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats	484 acres
Restoration and Management of Natural Ecosystems	2,128 acres
Riparian Forest Buffer	179 acres
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	30 acres
Roof Runoff Structure	182
Sediment Basin	1
Spring Development	2
Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	400 acres
Structure for Water Control	80
Subsurface Drain	3,070 feet
Surface Drainage, Field Ditch	2,902 feet
Tree/Shrub Pruning	74 acres
Underground Outlet	3,850 feet
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	1,283 acres
Waste Field Storage Area	1
Waste Storage Facility	19
Waste Utilization	5,218 acres
Waste Water & Feedlot Runoff Control	1 acre
Wastewater Treatment Strip	4,506 acres
Water Well	16
Watering Facility	60
Wetland Enhancement	5 acres
Wetland Restoration	5 acres
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	602 acres
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	700 feet

Conservation Work in Massachusetts	FY 2004
Conservation System Plans Written, Cropland	5,270 acres
Conservation System Plans Written, Grazing Land	1,267 acres
Grazing Land, Practices Applied (ac)	1,063 acres
Forest Stand Improvement (ac)	262 acres
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Written	17
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Applied	12
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans Applied acreage	1,425 acres
Ag. Wetlands Created/Restored	5 acres

Massachusetts Agricultural Profile

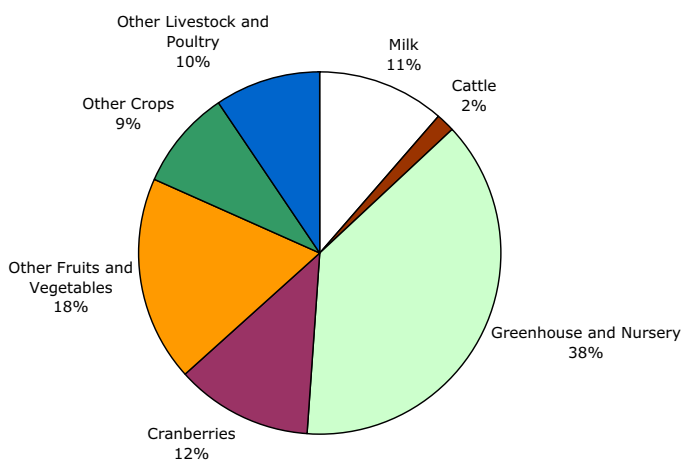


Agricultural land use in Massachusetts



	acres	1997	2002
Land in farms		577,637	518,570
Cropland		247,267	207,734
Harvested cropland		184,480	159,253
Cropland used only for pasture or grazing		46,060	29,858
Other cropland		16,727	18,623
Woodland		219,765	210,891
Land in house lots, ponds, roads, wasteland, etc		82,703	68,666

Agricultural Cash Receipts



	1,000 dollars
Milk	\$ 43,296
Cattle	\$ 7,092
Greenhouse and Nursery	\$ 145,865
Cranberries	\$ 47,701
Other Fruits and Vegetables	\$ 70,465
Other Crops	\$ 33,593
Other Livestock and Poultry	\$ 36,734

Source: USDA New England Agricultural Statistics Service

Massachusetts Agriculture

- Number of farms..... 6,100
- Farmland 520,000 acres
- Agricultural cash receipts \$380 million
- Sales of farm products sold directly to consumers \$31 million
- New England rank for direct sales to consumers #1
- Percentage of N.E. total 38 percent
- National rank for direct sales to consumers..... #7
- National rank for direct sales as a percent of total sales #2
- Percentage of family-owned farms..... 80 percent
- Percentage defined as “smallfarms” by USDA..... 93 percent
- Annual expenses for farm inputs \$216 million
- Average per acre value of farmland \$9,300
- National rank for farmland value #4
- Net farm income per acre..... \$63
- Year-round farm workers 5,000
- Seasonal farm workers 9,000
- Wages paid by farms \$99 million
- Agricultural exports \$300 million
- Agricultural export-related jobs 3,600
- Income tax revenue generated \$21 million

Sources: *New England Agricultural Statistics, 2003* and *U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2002 (USDA)*.

Fingertip Facts

Massachusetts agriculture today shows promise as a dynamic and vital industry. Though Massachusetts farms are small, local farmers are discovering ways to make their farms more viable by getting the most from each acre, they are responding to challenges like high production costs and development pressure, and they are finding ways to benefit from their close proximity to consumers.

Conservation in Massachusetts

- Farmland protected through ag. restrictions since 1977 52,735 acres
- Farmland lost since 1977 57,359 acres
- Agricultural land converted to developed uses 1992-1997.... 27,200 acres
- State rank by percentage of ag. land developed 2
- Average annual rate of ag. land developed 5,440 acres
- State dollars spent on agricultural restrictions since 1977 \$126 million
- Farmland protected with federal funds 7,500 acres
- Federal dollars spent on agricultural restrictions since 2002 \$12 million
- Towns with protected farmland 148
- Early successional wildlife habitat protected in 2003 368 acres
- Wetland and riparian habitat restored 2002-2004 405 acres
- Salt marsh restored in 2003 78 acres
- Grassland protected in 2003 118 acres
- Cropland protected from erosion 2001-2004 3,767 acres
- Land protected from flooding 2001-2004 4,762 acres
- Land benefitting from water conservation 2002-2004 10,712 acres
- Land protected through nutrient management 2002-2004 13,440 acres

Sources: *USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Massachusetts state office* and *National Resources Inventory; Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources*

Conservation is important to all Massachusetts citizens because it safeguards fresh air, pure water, healthy soils, scenic vistas, productive farms and habitat for wildlife. It is essential to the quality of life that all Massachusetts citizens expect. Conservation is important not only on farms but also in communities and backyards across the Commonwealth.

Contact Us

Services for Massachusetts landowners:

- ✓ Technical assistance
- ✓ Demonstration projects
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Farm planning

State Commission for the Conservation of Soil, Water and Related Resources

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Conservation District Offices

Berkshire Conservation District

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413-443-6867 Ext. 4

Bristol Conservation District

P.O. Box 475, 84 Center Street
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508-669-6558

Cape Cod Conservation District

P.O. Box 678
Barnstable, MA 02630
508-771-8757

Dukes Conservation District

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Essex Conservation District

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978-774-5578

Franklin Conservation District

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Middlesex Conservation District

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978-692-9395

Nantucket Conservation District

P.O. Box 1146
Nantucket, MA 02554
508-228-7244

Norfolk Conservation District

400 Main Street
Walpole, MA 02018
508-668-0995

Plymouth County Conservation District

15 Cranberry Highway
West Wareham, MA 02576
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Suffolk Conservation District

P.O. Box 245
Boston, MA 02121
617-451-9141

Worcester County Conservation District

52 Boyden Road, Room 100
Holden, MA 01520
508-829-4477 Ext. 5

NRCS Offices

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Amherst, MA 01002

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Barnstable Field Office

508-771-6476

Serving Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket counties

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- Donald Liptack, District Conservationist
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Greenfield Field Office

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- Rita Thibodeau, District Conservationist
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Serving Hampden and Hampshire counties

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Hadley, MA 01035

- Dwane Coffey, District Conservationist
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Holden Field Office

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Pittsfield Field Office

413-443-1776 ext 3

Serving Berkshire County

78 Center Street, Suite 206
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- Bruce Philbrick, District Conservationist
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Westford Field Office

978-692-1904 ext 3

Serving Essex, Middlesex and Suffolk counties

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- Daniel Lenthall, District Conservationist
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West Wareham Field Office

508-295-5151 ext 2

Serving Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties

15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA 02576

- Leonard Reno, District Conservationist
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